Netherlands-Israel Cooperation Forum

Joint Statement

Today, December 8, 2013, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mr. Mark Rutte, and the Prime Minister of the State of Israel, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, note with satisfaction the excellent relations between the two countries, which are rooted in historic ties of friendship and cooperation in many areas and on many levels.

Following the Joint Declaration issued by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Frans Timmermans in Jerusalem on 17 June 2013, the Governments have decided to establish the "Netherlands-Israel Cooperation Forum", which serves as an expression of the longstanding friendship between the countries.

The Forum will provide a framework for initiating and cultivating private sector led initiatives, as well as an opportunity for regular political dialogue on a range of issues relating to bilateral relations and developments in the international arena and the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions.

The Governments have decided that the Forum's principal objective is to strengthen bilateral relations by increasing cooperation in the field of innovation and by bringing together relevant representatives from the government, private sector, knowledge institutions and civil society to explore new fields for mutual benefit.

The Governments have decided that the Forum will be convened every two years at ministerial level, alternately in Israel and the Netherlands. These meetings will be led by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the two Governments

The Forum will be supported by a flexible and results-oriented system of technical working groups, which will explore opportunities for increasing cooperation with respect to innovative technologies in areas such as water technology, energy and natural gas, high-tech and life sciences, as well as food security and agri-technology. It will also provide ideas and establish contacts for more targeted, smaller-scale activities, to be pursued subsequent to bi-annual meetings of the Forum.

The Governments take note of the outcomes of the various Forum working groups and other consultations on a wide range of issues, inter alia, the following:

Government-to-Government

- The Governments agreed the first bilateral Innovation Day will take place in the Netherlands, in the first half of 2014.

- The Governments will examine how they can strengthen their international development agendas through policy level dialogue and joint cooperation on a limited number of themes through their respective aid instruments.

- The Netherlands gladly continues to represent Israel in the boards of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Both sides agreed to examine how this constituency relationship can benefit in strengthening each country's development agenda and inquire how multilateral support from the World Bank can enhance cooperation on specific priorities and projects.

- The Government of the Netherlands has decided to provide financial support to the medical training program of the Peres Center for Peace.

- The Governments will examine the possibilities for establishing a bilateral young leadership platform.

- The Governments are committed to expanding and deepening cooperation on cyber defense with a view to fostering understanding of threats and the establishment of defenses by promoting cooperation between their government agencies, business communities, entrepreneurs, and academic and research institutions.

- The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands will establish, per 1 January 2014, an "Innovation and Investment Unit" in order to promote the expansion of bilateral technological cooperation in various areas and to provide an integrated approach to bilateral economic relations. The unit will be staffed by innovation and investment experts, and will cooperate with a revitalized Israel-Netherlands Chamber of Commerce and other relevant governmental and non-governmental institutions.

Business-to-Business

- The various working groups, under the general guidance of the respective ambassadors of both countries, will ensure follow-up and implementation with regard to the outcomes of the three business seminars on water technology, energy and natural gas, and agri-technology.

- A cooperation initiative on agri-food and technology has been discussed between Metropolitan Food Security Netherlands and the Netherlands Agri Food and Technology Centre with counterparts from Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Israel Export & International Cooperation Institute in the fields of innovation and R&D, business development and cooperation in third countries and will be further promoted.

- Cooperation on open innovation in the high-tech & life sciences cluster will continue to be promoted through seminars in Israel by the Dutch province of North-Brabant through its agency BOM Foreign Investments.

- Israeli and Dutch companies will endeavor to jointly develop, produce, install and market new energy systems for smart-grids in collaboration with relevant entities and knowledge institutes. Similarly, joint business development is envisioned in relation to water and food systems for the horticulture and water markets.

- Melodea of Israel and Competence Centre Paper and Board of the Netherlands will cooperate in the realization of a small-scale installation of Melodea's technology for use in the Dutch paper industry. This facility will turn residual streams of paper, which otherwise would go to waste, into nano-cellulose particles. This facility will be used as a springboard to extend Melodea's technological expertise throughout Europe.

- The Netherlands will continue to promote cooperation in the innovative design sector by connecting mutual expertise and knowledge in both countries. Therefore, the Netherlands, together with local Israeli partners, will organize a conference in 2014 focused on further development of the use of bicycles in Israel, including infrastructure and design.

Knowledge-to-Knowledge

- The Dutch Technology Foundation STW and the Israeli Ministry of Science, Technology and Space seek to intensify bilateral research collaboration in the applied and engineering sciences. The organizations will use mutual expertise to intensify cross-national collaboration between universities and research institutions with the intention to launch a joint call for joint research proposals, with the participation of the private sector.

- The Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael' and the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem signed an Agreement of Cooperation on exchange and cooperation in the field of international relations.

- After successful conclusion of a joint research project in the field of bacteriological infections that was supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Hebrew University Netherlands Association and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem will continue cooperation on a research project on improving public health through spatial risk assessment of vector-borne diseases.

- The Israel Electric Company and KIWA of the Netherlands through its local representative - V.P.C NG. Ltd., are cooperating in order to establish Israel's first Gas Academy in Hadera for the provision of vocational training, which is to be officially opened on 9 December 2013.

Signed in Israel on 8 December 2013, which corresponds to the 5th day of Kislev 5774, in two original copies, in the English language.

H.E. Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu	**H.E. Mr. Mark Rutte**
Prime Minister of the State of Israel	Prime Minister of the Netherlands